BOLIVIA: Military Takeover

The Bolivian military, which yesterday seized control from interim President Gueiler and announced that a junta composed of the three service commanders will govern the country, faces almost certain opposition both at home and from abroad.

The coup, which began yesterday with a military takeover in Trinidad, spread to other key cities and culminated with units in the La Paz area taking control of the capital and national government. The military moved quickly to round up several government officials and civilian opponents, although the winner of the recent presidential election, Hernan Siles Zuazo, apparently is still in hiding. Curfews have been imposed, radio stations in the major cities have been seized, and pressure is being put on President Gueiler to formally resign.

The military claims that it intervened because of Marxist subversion, electoral fraud, economic deterioration, and corruption under the Gueiler administration. Hardliners in the military had expected to be ousted from key command positions under a Siles government.

The new government's ability to survive will be seriously challenged in the short run by civilian resistance and possible divisions within its own ranks over its current leaders. The junta probably will also receive little international recognition.

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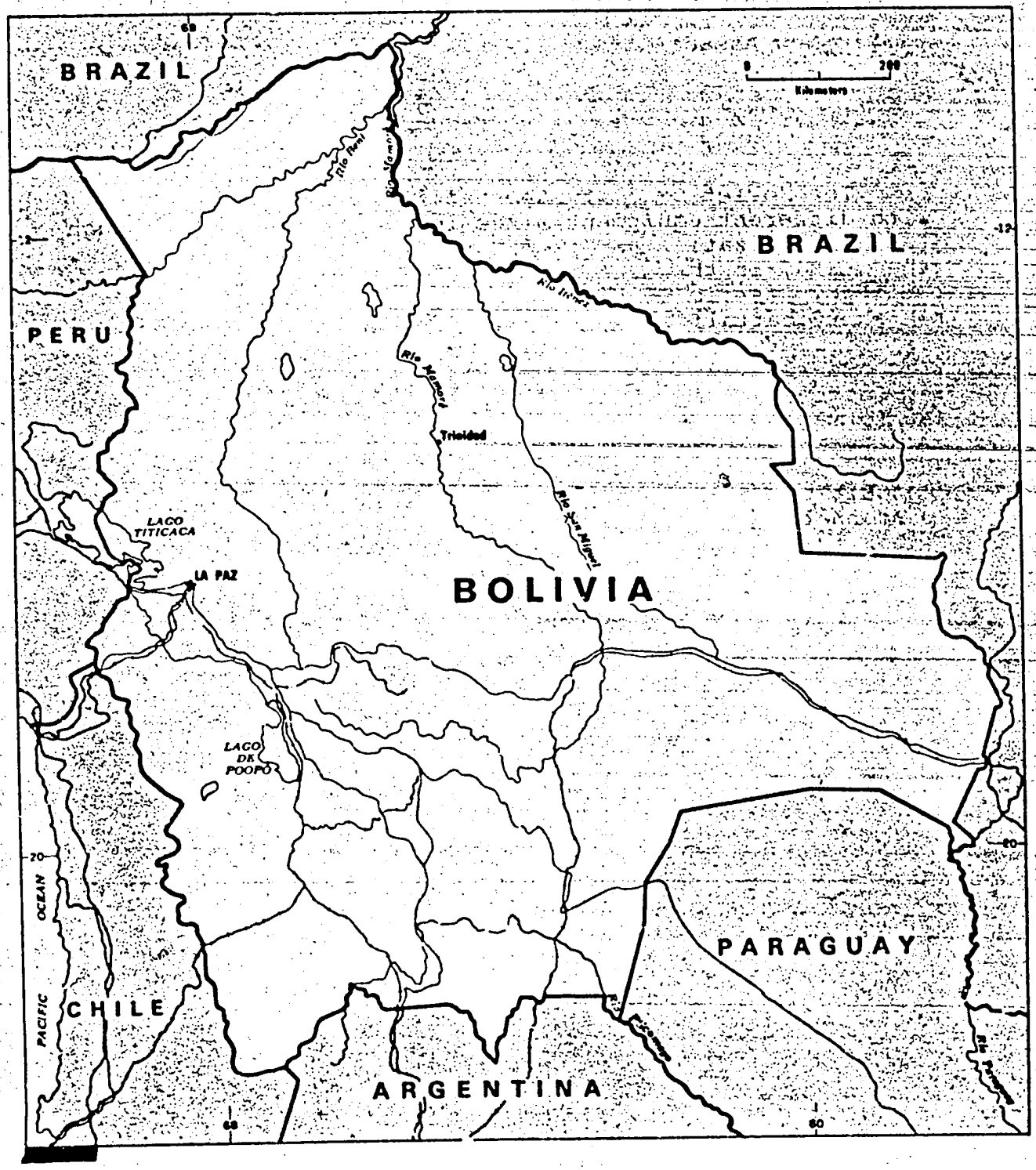
Approved for Release FEB 2000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